

midst of plenty, there is sadness and loneliness, but there's always a soul to put your arm around you and say, "I love you."

I'm here to call—to thank you for what you do. I'm here to spell out a practical strategy by those of us who are involved with the dispensing of taxpayers' money to help nourish the armies of compassion and to make sure this great country of ours, the greatest on the face of the Earth, holds out hope for every single citizen who is a citizen of our land.

Thank you for what you do. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:06 p.m. at the Los Angeles Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor James K. Hahn of Los Angeles, CA; Alphonso R. Jackson, Acting Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development; Bishop Charles E. Blake, West Angeles Church of God in Christ; Rev. Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, senior minister, First A.M.E. Church, Los Angeles; Rev. Dr. Cecelia Williams Bryant, wife of Rev. John Richard Bryant; Bishop Gabino Zavala, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Los Angeles; Dr. Robert H. Schuller, pastor, Crystal Cathedral; and Tom Lewis, founder, the Fishing School.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Los Angeles

March 3, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all for coming. Appreciate you coming. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is great to be back in Los Angeles. I'm thankful you all are here.

I'm aware that they handed out the Oscars last Sunday night. "Terminator 3" didn't win any. [Laughter] But the star of the movie had a pretty good year. I know he's new to politics, but he is getting used to all the lights and the cameras. I used to think my brother Jeb was the coolest Governor. By electing Arnold Schwarzenegger, the voters of California have shown that no party can take this State for granted.

The Vice President and I are going to be spending some quality time in the State of California. With your help, we're going to make California part of a nationwide victory in November of '04. Speaking of the Vice

President, he's doing a fine job. The country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [Laughter]

It's good to see the Desert Moms here. Those are the ones who didn't go through the background check. [Laughter] But recently, Laura was in the desert with the Moms. And she sends her best to not only the Moms but all the folks here. I'm really proud of Laura. She is a fabulous First Lady and a great wife.

I want to thank my friend Brad Freeman, who has been a loyal friend. He's the State finance chairman here in California. I want to thank my friend Gerry Parsky, who's the State campaign general chairman. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds from Cincinnati, Ohio, who is the chairman of the Bush-Cheney reelect campaign. I appreciate the fact that Bill Simon is here and his wife, Cindy. I want to thank them for having served.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. [Applause] There you go. I appreciate my friend Rabbi Marvin Hier, who gave the blessing. He has a wonderful heart. It sets an incredibly important tone for the country. I want to thank Art Yoon, who's the mayor pro tem of Hermosa Beach, for leading the pledge.

But most of all, I want to thank you all for being our friend. Thank you for helping us. Thank you for getting ready for this campaign.

Last night, I placed a call to Senator Kerry. I told him I was looking forward to a spirited campaign. I congratulated him on his victory. This should be an interesting debate on the issues. He spent two decades in Congress; he's built up quite a record. [Laughter] In fact, Senator Kerry has been in Washington long enough to take both sides on just about every issue.

The voters will have a very clear choice this year between keeping the tax relief that is moving this economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It's a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain

in the face of danger. I'm ready for this campaign. I look forward to setting the alternative squarely before the American people.

We've achieved great things the past 3 years. But most importantly, we have a positive vision for the years ahead, a positive vision for winning the war against terror and extending peace and freedom, a positive vision for creating jobs and promoting opportunity, a positive vision for compassion here at home. We'll leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win on the 2nd of November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges, and we have given serious answers. We came to office with a stock market in decline, an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and now our economy is the fastest growing of any industrialized nation.

We confronted corporate criminals that cost people their jobs and their savings, so we passed strong corporate reforms and made it clear we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, so we pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network. And the rest of them will learn there is no cave or hole deep enough to hide from American justice.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, so we ended the two most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. We freed over 50 million people. And once again, America is proud to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we gave our military the resources and respect they deserve. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

When we came to office, people had gotten used to gridlock, and old problems were used to score political points. Old problems were politicized and debated and then just passed on from year to year. But we came to Washington to get things done. We passed major reforms to raise the standards in our

public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to get prescription drugs and choices to our seniors. We have chosen to lead, and we have delivered results for the American people.

It is the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. A President needs to step up, make the hard decisions, keep his commitments, and that is exactly how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. My opponent hasn't offered much in the way of strategies to win the war or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear from that side is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. My administration has taken on the big issues with optimism and resolve and determination, and we stand ready to lead this Nation for 4 more years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we've left more money in the hands that earned it. By spending and investing and helping create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Government would have.

Because we acted, our economy is growing stronger. The economy grew in the second half of 2003 at the fastest rate in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Interest rates and inflation are low. Homeownership is the highest rate ever. Manufacturing is increasing. We've added 336,000 new jobs over the last 5 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

My opponent has plans for those tax cuts. He wants to take them away, and he would use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea: To keep this economy growing and to create jobs, the tax cuts must be permanent.

And we must do more to keep the economy growing. We need to maintain fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. We need to protect small-business owners and employees

from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need to help control the costs of health care by passing Federal medical liability reform. We need to continue to open up markets for America's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize the electricity system and make our country less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

My opponent talks about job creation too, but he's against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs and economic isolation won't get anyone hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur agenda.

This economy of ours is going through a time of change, and we're helping people to gain the skills and security to make a good living. All skills start with education, so I worked with Congress to pass the No Child Left Behind Act. This is a good law that is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. It's a law that is bringing higher standards and accountability to every public school so that not one single child is left behind.

And there's more to do. We have a plan to help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We have a plan to help community colleges train workers for the industries that are creating the most new jobs. You see, this administration understands clearly that education is the gateway to a hopeful future, and that gate must be open to all Americans.

We're also working to promote an ownership society in America in which more people own their own homes and build their own savings. We want more people owning their own small businesses. We want people to own and manage their own health care plans. We want younger workers to be able to own and manage their own retirement under Social Security. I understand this, that when people have solid assets, they gain independence and security and dignity and more control over their own future. I believe in private property so much, I want everybody to have some in America.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. My opponent is against personal retirement accounts. He's against putting patients in charge of Medicare. He's

against tax relief. He seems to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority, more choices, and more control over our own lives. It's the same old Washington mindset: They'll give the orders, and you will pay the bills. I've got news for the Washington crowd. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back. I trust the people of this country. I trust the people to make the best decisions for their own money, for their own health, for their own retirement.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in this world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious dangers. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes of North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. If America shows weakness and uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch. This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom. And today, no friend or enemy doubts the word of the United States of America.

America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance; the dictator now sits in a prison cell. September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I will never forget: America must confront threats before they fully materialize.

In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country. In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make, either to take the word of a madman or take action to defend America and the world. Faced with

that choice, I will defend America every time. *[Applause]* Thank you.

My opponent admits that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He just didn't support my decision to remove Saddam from power. Maybe he was hoping Saddam would lose the election in Iraq. *[Laughter]* We showed the dictator and a watching world that America means what it says. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, Saddam's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their own weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the very heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This coalition of killers is trying to shake our will. They don't understand America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We're on the offensive. We'll defeat them there so we don't have to face them in our own country.

We're calling on other nations to help Iraq to build a free society. A free Iraq will make us all more safe. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. My opponent says he approves of bold action in the world, but only if other countries don't object. *[Laughter]* I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners in Iraq right now. Yet America must never outsource America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

Some are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. My opponent said the war on terror is far less of a military operation and far more of an intelligence-gathering, law enforcement operation. I disagree. Our Na-

tion followed this approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought by some to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with the men and women of our military. These good folks are defending our country. They're sacrificing for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember that our greatest strength is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government. We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for the works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and to send people back into lives of dependence. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon, exploited, or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture of America by court order.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you have a responsibility to tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we would like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, a time when resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I remember a lot about that day. I remember the workers in hardhats who were shouting, "Whatever it takes." I remember the guy who pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend the security of America, whatever it takes.

In these times, I've also been a witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges, our capacity to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger. I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom and peace. We have a duty to spread opportunity to every part of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:52 p.m. at the Shrine Auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Brad Freeman, California State finance chairman, Gerald L. Parsky, California State chairman, and Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and Bill Simon, former California gubernatorial candidate, and his wife, Cindy.

Statement on Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

March 3, 2004

For 17 years, Ben Nighthorse Campbell has been a strong advocate in the Congress for the people of Colorado. He has been a leader in seeking the protection of our public lands and natural resources and a tireless champion for Native Americans. Ben is a patriot who has served his country in Congress, as an airman in Korea, and as a competitor in the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo.

Laura and I send our best to Ben, his wife, Linda, and their family.

Proclamation 7759—American Red Cross Month, 2004

March 3, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The American Red Cross was founded in 1881 by Clara Barton and chartered by the Congress in 1905 to provide humanitarian services to the United States in times of need. Today, the Red Cross remains dedicated to relieving suffering by helping our citizens prepare for and respond to emergencies and natural disasters.